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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 002491

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SUBJECT: DUMA, FEDERATION COUNCIL LIKELY TO RECOGNIZE  
INDEPENDENCE OF ABKHAZIA AND SOUTH OSSETIA

Classified By: Ambassador John R. Beyrle. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary. Duma International Relations Committee Chair Kosachev confirmed to Ambassador August 20 that Russia's Duma and upper chamber, the Federation Council, were likely to recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia during an extraordinary session of the two chambers that had been called for the week of August 25. While privately acknowledging that recognition did not help the situation, Kosachev said emotions were too high for it not to pass. Expressing strong dismay at the damage to the U.S.-Russia relationship, Kosachev pleaded to the U.S. to be more "balanced" in its public statements, saying that would also help lower the rhetoric in Moscow. He said that statements that appeared to be telling Russia what it should do were bad tactics; Russia was no longer in a position to be dictated to. Ambassador told Kosachev that recognition would be a very negative step to take, and ran counter to point six of the six-point plan. He urged Kosachev to do what he could to prevent the Duma from going forward with recognition. He also stressed that Russia's actions needed to match its words; Russian forces needed to withdraw from Georgia in accordance with the six-point plan. End summary.

Russia's Parliament Likely to Recognize Independence

12. (C) Duma International Relations Committee Chair Konstantin Kosachev told Ambassador August 20 that the Duma and Federation Council would consider, and most likely approve, recognition of independence for Abkhazia and South Ossetia during the plenary session to convene next week. While privately acknowledging that such recognition would not "add value" to the situation, Kosachev said emotions were so high, it would be almost impossible to prevent it from happening. He clarified that such recognition would need a Presidential Decree to become effective, and would not predict the likelihood of such a decree by Medvedev.

13. (C) Ambassador made clear that recognition would be a very negative step to take. He stressed that it would counter the intent of point six of the six-point plan, and undermine efforts to resolve the situation through international negotiation. He urged Kosachev to do what he could to prevent the Duma from going forward with recognition. In response to Ambassador's question, Kosachev said they would go forward with recognition despite the fact that it would change Russia's whole argument about Kosovo.

Urging More "Balanced" Statements

14. (C) In an impassioned manner, Kosachev related to Ambassador that a large majority of Russians supported the actions of the government in South Ossetia. Showing the Ambassador photos of destruction and casualties in

Tskhinvali, Kosachev said Russians from all walks of life - from his Duma colleagues to people on the streets - felt strongly about the humanitarian tragedy in South Ossetia.

15. (C) Noting his long-time pro-Western orientation, Kosachev said it would help considerably if the West, and the U.S. in particular, could be more "balanced" in their statements. He urged the U.S. to state publicly (again) that there could be no military solution to the conflict. He added that "some acknowledgment" of Georgian responsibility for civilian casualties and suffering, and for destruction of civilian property, would help counter the "hawks" who were driving the policy.

16. (C) Kosachev added that statements that were perceived as the West telling Russia what to do were counterproductive, and were viewed very negatively by the government and the public. A different tactic was needed. While before the crisis began, there were many who would ask what Washington or Europe's views were before taking a decision, now, Kosachev said, that had changed: nobody could be seen to let the U.S. or Europe influence Russia's policy.

17. (C) The Ambassador stressed that the most important thing for Russia was to match its action to its word that it was fulfilling the six-point plan. Russian troops needed to withdraw; Russia needed to agree to allow the OSCE's 100 monitors in as soon as possible and without restrictions (Kosachev said he thought there would be no difficulty with the monitors); there needed to be an international peacekeeping force agreed as soon as possible; and Russia

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needed to acknowledge Georgia's territorial integrity, which included South Ossetia and Abkhazia within the internationally-recognized borders of Georgia.

Comment

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18. (C) Kosachev, who is an effective advocate of the GOR policy, expressed genuine distress at the damage the situation has caused to the U.S.-Russia relationship. While he may personally believe that recognition is not the best way forward, he made clear that it would be politically impossible for him to challenge it, as the emotions in the country were so high.  
BEYRLE